

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-05

SAJ-01 IO-10 DHA-02 ORM-01 /090 W

----- 000561

R 081513Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2000

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDOF

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMCONSUL MUNICH

EN/AMCONSUL BREMEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 12818

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW

SUBJECT: HELMUT KOHL AFT HELSINKI

SUMMARY: CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN AND DESIGNATED CHANCELLOR

CANDIDATE HELMUT KOHL TKRHE AMBASSADOR AUGUST 7

THAT HE IS MILDLY OPTOMISTIC ABOUT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC

COALITION CHANCES IN THE FALL 1976 NATIONAL ELECTION,

EVEN IF FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS REFUSES TO JOIN HIS SHADOW

CABINET. A WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE FRG

AND GROWING SUPPORT FOR HIS PERSONAL CANDIDACY, HE

BELIEVES, SHOULD OFFSET SPD-JGEFFORTS AND UNCREASING

OVERT SOVIET OPPOSITION TO HIM. END SUMMARY

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1. AT A LUNCHEON HOSTED FOR THE AMBASSADOR AT THE RHINELAND PALATINATE STATE CHANCELLERY IN MAINZ, MINISTER PRESIDENT KOHL WAS FORCEFUL YET RELAXED IN FOCUSING ON TWO MAJOR THEMES: THE OCTOBER 1976 NATIONAL ELECTION AND POST-CSCE SUMMIT CONCERNS. MILD OPTIMISM ABOUT HIS CHANCES IN THE CHANCELLOR RACE WERE DIMMED SOMEWHAT BY A DOUBT THAT THE WEST HAD BENEFITTED FROM THE CSCE DELIBERATIONS.

2. AS OF NOW KOHL BELIEVES HIS COALITION HAS A 50-50 CHANCE IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION. HE FORESEES A BLEAK ECONOMIC WINTER AHEAD, WHICH SHOULD CUT INTO THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT'S POPULARITY. UNEMPLOYMENT COULD JUMP TO 1.7 MILLION, WITH ANOTHER 1.3 MILLION UNDER-EMPLOYED. THIS WILL RESULT IN A SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL JOLT TO THE ELECTORATE, PARTICULARLY TO THOSE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WHO, AFTER BEING OUT OF WORK FOR A YEAR, WILL HAVE TO MOVE FROM UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION TO OUTRIGHT RELIEF. THE ELDER GERMAN GENERATION IS BY NATURE OPPOSED TO SUCH A SOCIAL STIGMA; THE YOUNGER GENERATION ON THE OTHER HAND IS BITTER THAT SUCH RELIEF BENEFITS MUST ONE DAY BE REPAID FROM SUBSEQUENT INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS.

3. ACCORDING TO KOHL, THE PROBLEM OF RAISING CAPITAL IS SERIOUSLY CUTTING INTO THE ABILITY OF ALL TYPES OF GERMAN FIRMS TO WITHSTAND PRESENT PRESSURES ON PRODUCTION. EVEN SUCH SOUND AND HIGH-REPUTATION FIRMS AS THE BIG CHEMICAL FIRMS ARE HAVING TO RETRENCH, SINCE HIGHER INTEREST RATES ELSEWHERE ARE DRAWING OFF NEEDED SHORT-TERM FUNDS. POORLY RUN FIRMS, PARTICULARLY IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY, ARE ALREADY FAR OVER-EXTENDED. MEDIUM-SIZED BUT WELL MANAGED ENTERPRISES ARE ALSO HAVING TO CUT BACK OPERATIONS, AS A RESULT OF THE LIQUIDITY SQUEEZE.

4. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY MEMBERSHIP IS NOW APPROACHING THE MILLION MARK, A FAR CRY FROM THE DAYS WHEN KONRAD ADENAUER DOUBTED THAT THERE WERE 250,000 WILLING SO TO COMMIT THEMSELVES. KOHL HAS HOPES OF

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REVEALING HIS SHADOW CABINET DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, TO PROVIDE ADDED MOMENTUM IN TQ-CAMPAIGN PERIOD. CSU LEADER STRAUSS WOULD NORMALLY BE ON THE TEAM, BUT KOHL IS BEGINNING TO HAVE SOME DOUBTS THAT HE WILL PERMIT HIS NAME TO BE LISTED.

5. THE CDU CHAIRMAN DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SPD-FDP COALITION WILL BREAK UP BEFORE THE ELECTION. RATHER,

KOHL SEES THE BEST CHANCE TO DRAW THE FDP BACK INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CDU/CSU AS OCCURRING DURING THE 1978 FEDERAL PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (BUNDESVERSAMMLUNG), WHEN PRESIDENT SCHEEL (FDP) WILL RECOGNIZE THAT WITHOUT CDU/CSU SUPPORT THE FORMER FDP LEADER ANNOT BE RE-ELECTED.

6. THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SCENE TROUBLES KOHL. HE DEPLORES THE EUPHORIA IN THE AFTERMATH OF HELSINKI. IN THIS CONTEXT HE CITED RECENT EXIENCES WHICH HE

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----- 000335

R 081513Z AUG 75

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 12818

AND SEVERAL WESTERN EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERS HAVE HAD WITH THE SOVIETS. CDU PARTY SECRETARY BIEDENKOPF WAS REPROACHED THREATENINGLY BY

A SOVIET PRESS REPRESENTATIVE A FEW WEEKS AGO, FOR HIS VIEWS ON CSCE. KOHL HIMSELF RECENTLY WENT THROUGH A WHOLE EVENING OF ANTI-AMERICAN DIATRIBES FROM SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO BONN FALIN, DESPITE HIS BEST EFFORTS TO SHUT THE LATTER OFF AND TO TALK INSTEAD ABOUT GERMAN-RUSSIAN PROBLEMS. LIKEWISE, DISCUSSIONS WHICH HE (KOHL) HAS RECENTLY HAD WITH AUSTRIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERS DURING PAST WEEKS INDICATE A CONCERTED SOVIET ANTI-US CAMPAIGN AMONGST SOME WEST EUROPEAN OPPOSITION PARTIES IN WHAT PRESUMABLY, AS A CONFIDENTIAL

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RESULT OF THE HELSINKI SUMMIT AND THE SPACE LINK-UP, SHOULD BE A PERIOD OF SWEETNESS AND LIGHT.

7. KOHL ACKNOWLEDGED A MORNING PRESS ITEM THAT REPORTED HIS STRONG CRITICISM OF THE RECENT FRG-POLISH FINANCIAL AGREEMENT TO ALLOW EMIGRATION OF ETHNIC GERMANS. THE CDU LEADER STATED THAT, WHILE HE ACCEPTED THE MOSCOW AND WARSAW TREATIES WITH BONN, HE SAW NO REASON TO GO OVERBOARD WITHOUT CLEAR INDICATIONS OF A COMMUNIST CHANGE OF HEART.

10. COMMENT: RESTED AFTER HIS EARLY SUMMER HOLIDAY, KOHL IS OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED TO BE OFF AND RUNNING. ON AUGUST 15 HE WILL ATTEMPT A LOW-KEY WEEKEND VISIT TO THE GDR, TO BE FOLLOWED BY A MOSCOW VISIT STARTING SEPTEMBER 22, WHICH MIGHT RUN TO THE END OF THE MONTH. WASHINGTON, PARIS, AND LONDON ARE ALSO ON HIS SCHEDULE DURING A BUSY FALL DURING WHICH THIS ABLE POLITICIAN AIMS TO BOOST HIS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HE BELIEVES HE IS PICKING UP POINTS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE.

HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL LEADERS, PARTY MEETINGS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: WorrelSW
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BONN12818
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750274-0825
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750867/aaaacgth.tel
Line Count: 213
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: WorrelSW
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by WorrelSW>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HELMUT KOHL AFT HELSINKI SUMMARY: CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN AND DESIGNATED CHANCELLOR
TAGS: PINT, GE, CDU PARTY, (KOHL, HELMUT), (STRAUSS, JOSEF)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006